



News Release



Shelby County Health Department

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Shelby County's First Storm Spotter Class Offered for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

MEMPHIS – The Shelby County Health Department's Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program (PHEPP) announces the first of many collaborative efforts with Deaf Connect of the Mid-South and the National Weather Service (NWS) to offer the county's first Storm Spotter class for the Deaf and hard of hearing community.

The National Weather Service offers storm spotting classes, also known as SKYWARN, to citizens across the area to train volunteers to support their local community and government by providing the NWS with timely and accurate severe weather reports. "We are eager to take SKYWARN to the deaf and hard of hearing community," said Ben Schott, Warning Coordination Meteorologist with the National Weather Service. "Knowledge is a valuable resource and this unique experience is an excellent example of teamwork and innovation."

The FREE class will be offered **on Wednesday, April 9th from 1:00-3:00 pm at Deaf Connect of the Mid-South (144 North Bellevue Blvd)**. The National Weather Service will lead the class in its original format, and Deaf Connect will provide communication access for American Sign Language users.

Deaf Connect provides sign language interpreting services, advocacy, referral, and various social services for the Deaf and hard of hearing individuals while offering interpreter training workshops and sign language classes for the hearing population. "Our clients are excited for the opportunity to become empowered to protect themselves, and potentially, their families from approaching storms," said Teresa Wilson, Executive Director of Deaf Connect of the Mid-South. "Educational activities and trainings offered in American Sign Language, or made accessible by qualified interpreters, allow our clients to gain greater independence through knowledge and practice."

"We are thrilled to coordinate this unique experience for the deaf and hard of hearing community in Memphis and Shelby County," said Kasia Smith-Alexander, Manager of PHEPP. "We look forward to a growing partnership with Deaf Connect, the National Weather Service, and other organizations in Shelby County that provide specific services to traditionally hard-to-reach communities. It's our goal and mission to connect service providers with the public and other responding agencies so we may better serve hard-to-reach communities, especially as we prepare for and respond to public health emergencies."

For more information on this or other future collaborative efforts, please contact Heather Burton, Risk Communication Coordinator for the Shelby County Health Department at (901) 222-8216 or Heather.Burton@shelbycountyttn.gov.

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